

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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P R 061450Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2275

INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 13580

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: CVIS BTRA UR

SUBJ: VISA PROCEDURES FOR COMMERCIAL VISITORS FROM USSR

REF: A) STATE 178220 NOTAL; B) STATE 193223 NOTAL

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY IS CONCERNED ABOUT SOVIET REACTION TO DEPARTMENT'S NEW SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITOR VISA PROCEDURES, AND QUESTIONS FEASIBILITY OF SOME OF THE PROCEDURAL MECHANICS. END SUMMARY.

2. IF LEGISLATION IS PASSED WHICH WOULD PERMIT EXTENSION OF MFN TO USSR AND RENEWAL OF EXIM BANK AUTHORIZATION ON TERMS PERMITTING US TO COMPETE WITH WESTERN EUROPEANS AND JAPANESE IN PROVIDING EXPORT FINANCING, EMBASSY FORESEES MINIMUM 25 PERCENT INCREASE IN SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS IN COMING YEAR. BECAUSE ONE LIKELY RESULT OF EXPANSION OF BILATERAL TRADE TIES IS INVOLVEMENT OF INCREASING NUMBER OF SMALLER FIRMS DISPERSED GEOGRAPHICALLY THROUGHOUT AMERICA, SUBMISSION OF NEEDED DATA WILL CLEARLY IMPOSE REAL BURDEN

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ON MFA, MFT AND OTHER SOVIET ORGANIZATIONS. WHILE EMBASSY

UNDERSTANDS AND APPRECIATES REASONS FOR AMENDING VISA PROCEDURES IN EFFORT TO MONITOR AND CONTROL MORE CLOSELY AND EFFICIENTLY THE TRAVEL OF SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS TO UNITED STATES, WE ARE CONCERNED THAT DEPARTMENT'S NEW COMVIS SOV PROCEDURES (REF A) WILL NOT ONLY APPEAR TO SOVIETS AS STEP BACKWARD FROM LIBERALIZATION AND SIMPLIFICATION OF TRAVEL AND CONTACT

WHICH HAVE SUPPOSEDLY ACCOMPANIED DETENTE, BUT WILL ALSO GENUINELY OVERLOAD SOVIET CAPACITY TO PROVIDE ACCURATE TRAVEL INFORMATION NECESSARY TO SATISFY US REQUIREMENTS.

3. EMBASSY INFORMED MFA OF COMVIS SOV REQUIREMENTS BY NOTE AUGUST 15. MFA CIRCULATED NEW US REQUIREMENTS TO MFT, AS EVIDENCED BY MFT OFFICIAL'S COMPLAINT TO CONSOFF THAT UNDER NEW PROCEDURES US IS ASKING FOR MORE INFORMATION THAN SOVIETS ASK OF US COMMERCIAL VISITORS. MFA HAS NOT YET RESPONDED OR COMMENTED ABOUT NEW COMVIS PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS, AND PRESUMABLY HAS THEM UNDER STUDY. EMBASSY PLANS TO MEET WITH MFA IN NEAR FUTURE TO DISCUSS MATTER, AND WILL ENDEAVOR TO PUT COMVIS PROGRAM IN POSITIVE LIGHT BY STRESSING HOPE THAT THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WILL ENABLE US SIDE TO ISSUE COMMERCIAL VISITOR VISAS MORE EFFICIENTLY AND EXPEDITIOUSLY.

4. RE REF B AND SUBSEQUENT EMBASSY COMVIS CABLES, EMBASSY SUGGESTS IT AND SOVIET MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD BE ACCORDED SOME PERIOD IN WHICH TO CONSULT ABOUT, AND ENDEAVOR TO IMPLEMENT, NEW COMVIS PROCEDURES. IN CUMBERSOME SOVIET BUREAUCRATIC SYSTEM NOT EVEN MFA DEALS DIRECTLY WITH COMMERCIAL VISITOR VISA APPLICANTS, BUT DEALS THROUGH MFT AND TRADE ORGANIZATIONS. SOVIET VISA REQUESTS ARE OFTEN IN BUREAUCRATIC PIPELINE SEVERAL WEEKS.

5. FOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING SET OF PROCEDURES INVOLVING OTHER US AGENCIES PROMISED PARA 1 REF A, BUT WHICH HAS NOT YET ARRIVED. ALSO, IN PREPARATION FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH MFA EMBASSY REQUESTS DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS ON FOLLOWING:

6. CLOSED AREA RESTRICTION:

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A. EMBASSY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN REASONS FOR RAISING CLOSED AREA QUESTION IN COMVIS PROCEDURES. IT ES EMBASSY'S UNDERSTANDING CLOSED AREAS ARE NOT APPLIED TO SPLEX VISITORS, INCLUDING MOST S AND T AGREEMENT VISITORS WHO NOW WILL FALL UNDER COMVIS (PARA 2 REF A). EMBOFF WHO WORKED IN SOV COMMERCIAL SECTION MID-1960S RECALLS THAT SOVIETS WERE NOT OBLIGED REQUEST CLOSED AREA EXCEPTIONS FOR COMMERCIAL TRAVELLERS AT THAT TIME. MFA HAS NOT BEEN REQUIRED TO MAKE CLOSED AREA

EXCEPTION REQUESTS IN VISA APPLICATIONS AT LEAST RECENTLY, SO COMVIS PROCEDURE FOR SUCH REQUESTS APPEARS TO CONSTITUTE NEW REQUIREMENT, AND NEW APPLICATION OF CLOSED AREA RESTRICTIONS.

B. DEPARTMENT IN PARA 4 REF A SPECIFIED THAT UNDER NEW COMVIS PROCEDURES MFA IS ASKED TO FORWARD WRITTEN APPLICATION FOR CLOSED AREA EXCEPTION WITH APPLICATION VISA FOR TRAVEL TO CLOSED AREA. EMBASSY ASSUMES INCLUSION OF SENTENCE MAKING SUCH REQUEST IN MFA VISA APPLICATION NOTE WOULD MEET DEPARTMENT'S REQUIREMENT, AND THAT NO SEPARATE, SECOND NOTE FROM MFA WOULD BE REQUIRED.

C. EMBASSY ANTICIPATES MFA, MFT AND TRADE ORGANIZATIONS HERE WOULD HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY IDENTIFYING WHICH US PLANTS AND FIRMS ARE IN CLOSED AREAS IN ALL CASES. ONLY GUIDE TO US CLOSED AREAS WHICH EMBASSY HAS AVAILABLE FOR DISTRIBUTION TO SOVIETS HERE IS LIMITED NUMBER OF COPIES OF AUGUST 15, 1967 US CLOSED AREAS MAP SHOWING CLOSED COUNTIES AND A FEW CITIES. IT WILL BE CUMBERSOME AND DIFFICULT FOR SOVIETS TO IDENTIFY AND LOCATE ON MAP THE COUNTY IN WHICH EACH US ESTABLISHMENT IS LOCATED. WHILE MFA AND SOVIET GOVERNMENT CERTAINLY HAVE CAPABILITY TO DO SUCH RESEARCH, CAPABILITY DOES NOT IN OUR OPINION EXIST IN PRESENT STAFFING OF MFA CONSULAR ADMINISTRATION UNIT WHICH PROCESSES AND PREPARES VISA REQUESTS TO AMEMBASSY.

D. TO MONITOR ACCURACY OF SOVIET IDENTIFICATION OF US CLOSED AREAS WOULD BE AN ADDITIONAL AND TIME-CONSUMING BURDEN ON AMEMBASSY CONSULAR SECTION WHICH IS ALREADY UNDER STRAIN COPING WITH PRESENT WORKLOAD.

E. THUS, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT REQUIREMENT FOR CLOSED AREA EXCEPTION REQUEST BE DELETED FROM COMVIS PROCEDURES. ALTERNATIVELY, CONFIDENTIAL

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PERHAPS COMVIS REQUIREMENT COULD BE MET BY SUGGESTING MFA INCLUDE SENTENCE REQUESTING EXCEPTION TO "ANY RELEVANT CLOSED AREA RESTRICTIONS" IN ALL COMMERCIAL VISITOR VISA APPLICATION NOTES, AND DEPARTMENT COULD CONTINUE TO IDENTIFY, MONITOR AND APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE TRAVEL TO CLOSED AREAS. PLEASE ADVISE.

7. RIGIDITY OF ITINERARIES:

A. AS INDICATED REF A PARA 4 AMERICAN HOST COMPANIES AND EVEN SOVIET COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATIONS IN UNITED STATES ARE OFTEN UNABLE TO FIND OUT SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS' PLANS UNTIL AFTER VISITORS' ARRIVAL IN UNITED STATES. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS OFTEN CANNOT PLAN THEIR FINAL ITINERARIES PRIOR TO DIRECT CONSULATIONS WITH HOST FIRMS AND SOVIET COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATIONS IN UNITED STATES AFTER ARRIVAL.

THUS, EMBASSY BELIEVES IT WOULD BE UNWORKABLE TO ATTEMPT TO INSIST THAT ITINERARIES SUBMITTED HERE MUST ALWAYS BE IN FINAL.

B. SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS OFTEN DEPART LATER THAN SCHEDULED, AND EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT DEPARTMENT CONTINUE TO AUTHORIZE VISAS VALID FOR ENTRY WITHIN DEFINED TIME PERIOD OF AT LEAST TWO OR THREE WEEKS. MONITORING ARRIVALS SHOULD BE SIMPLIFIED BY FACT THAT ALMOST ALL SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS ARRIVE ON AEROFLOT.

8. "COMVIS." WE AGREE WITH EE POSTS THAT "COMVIS" IS UNFORTUNATE CHOICE OF ACRONYM SUGGESTING "COMMUNIST VISA" OR "COMMIE VISA." WE CONCUR BUSVIS OR ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE PREFERABLE NOTATION ON VISA.

9. CONSULTATION WITH POSTS: ALTHOUGH WE APPRECIATE THAT DEPARTMENT KEPT EMBASSY INFORMED ABOUT CONCERN IN WASHINGTON ABOUT SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS TRAVEL IN UNITED STATES, WE REGRET DEPARTMENT DID NOT CONSULT POSTS OR INVITE EMBASSY TO COMMENT ABOUT MECHANICS OF NEW PROCEDURES BEFORE INSTRUCTIONS WERE ISSUED.

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